



## **The Effects of Administrative Reforms on the Activities of Advocacy Groups**

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## **About the author**

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For myself, I cannot live without my art. But I have never placed it above everything. If, on the other hand, I need it, it is because it cannot be separated from my fellow men, and it allows me to live, such as I am, on one level with them. It is a means of stirring the greatest number of people by offering them a privileged picture of common joys and sufferings. It obliges the artist not to keep himself apart; it subjects him to the most humble and the most universal truth. And often he who has chosen the fate of the artist because he felt himself to be different soon realizes that he can maintain neither his art nor his difference unless he admits that he is like the others. The artist forges himself to the others, midway between the beauty he cannot do without and the community he cannot tear himself away from.

–Albert Camus (Nobel Prize Banquet Speech)

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the role of organizations in the cultural sector has undergone radical change. Having started out as relatively autonomous interest representation groups acting in the political realm, they now find themselves to be partners of government at various levels in the planning and implementation of public policy. The adaptation of organizational capabilities to this new paradigm, in which government funding is ever-decreasing, has thus become an essential survival skill.

Accordingly, this study sets out to analyze changes in public governance in recent years, to assess the cultural sector's adaptation to this new environment, and to lay out potential future orientations for the sector.

The methodology combines a literature review covering theory applicable to the non-profit and community-based sector- and to the cultural sector specifically- with a threefold case study.



The paper opens with an overview of recent administrative reforms, considering their impact on organizations in the non-profit and community-based sector. It then moves on to an analysis of the specificities of the cultural sector, and the challenges it faces. The following sections cover the strategies which comparable sectors -environmentalism, forestry, and feminism- have adopted to respond to these shifts. The study closes by highlighting the findings relevant to the cultural sector, and does so along three orientations: the organization of the cultural sector, the legitimacy of its demands, and the nature of its activities.

## **1. The Voluntary Sector and Administrative Reform**

The role and efficacy of the voluntary sector<sup>1</sup> have undergone substantial change in recent years. This section reviews the theory around governance models in this sector and the recent redefinition of the interface between its organizations and government bodies.

### **1.1 External Environmental Factors**

The means by which public administrations handle their relations with the non-profit sector are determined by a wide array of considerations. Whereas governance models at the dawn of the past century typically defined the boundaries of public and private sectors in a very rigid manner, the recent trend has been close to the opposite. For a few years now – particularly since the 1980s- desegregation of previously isolated relationships between the sectors has been noticeable. This subsection retraces how this change took place, initially under the influence of certain ideologies, then through the crystallization of these *modus operandi* in legislation and formal administrative arrangements.

#### *New Public Management and Horizontal Governance*

The first variable having impacted the CCA's activities belongs to the larger category of administrative reform dubbed « New Public Management » (NPM), which gained favour in most western public administrations from the 1980s onwards. The end of the post-war welfare state's unquestioned dominance, in conjunction with the precarious financial situation of numerous governments, set the stage for a new concept of public service closely mirroring the private sector. In keeping with that *zeitgeist*, NPM aimed to achieve greater efficiency in public service

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<sup>1</sup> The expression « Voluntary Sector », as commonly employed in Government of Canada publications, designates all organizations which largely rely on volunteers, at least in their boards of directors. The cultural sector is thus a subcomponent of the voluntary sector.



by adopting management techniques directly imported from private-sector entities: sub-contracting, outsourcing, performance-based management, etc. (Kernaghan, Marson and Borins, 2001). The term «governance» (usually differentiated from the more structured, regulated concept of «government»), is frequently used to refer to the fragmentation of relationships and formal hierarchical linkages in favour of a softer, more decentralized and informal style of management. The key concept of managerialism lies at the heart of this new administrative paradigm. Parker (2002, p. 11) defines managerialism with a hint of cynicism as «the all-encompassing application of a narrow view of management as a generalized control technique », and many critics of current administrative trends, both in the public sector and in general, cite this definition in their unfavourable assessments. Management as a discipline is essentially based on an ultra-rational conception of human behaviour, whereby the agent (be she a public servant or a manager in a private firm), makes decisions to maximize her individual utility (Parker, 2002). In this view, the management of a bureaucracy is at its core a question of motivating essentially selfish individuals: there is thus no fundamental difference between managing bureaucracy and managing a private company. The emphasis on reducing the size and importance of the state in governance – which some have in fact termed the «privatization » of governance – is a facet of this managerialist shift, which has undeniably reconfigured the relationship between government and the voluntary sector.

Concurrently, the rise in popularity of « horizontal » governance, i.e. the involvement of civil society and clearly non-governmental organizations in societal decision-making, led to an increase in the importance of networks in public policy shaping (Phillips, forthcoming). Thus, in this new environment where governance trumps government, informal ties outweigh hierarchical relationships. From a theoretical standpoint, it is the nature of interactions between the stakeholders of a given public policy issue that have the greatest impact on the definition of said public policy (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). In the eyes of an external observer, belonging to networks (and, by extension, an organizations' ability to infiltrate said networks) becomes the foundation of governance. This perspective incorporates the notion of power (hence of influence and interest) into the analytical framework. Any study of organizational capacity in the voluntary sector will have to reflect this reality.

Laforest (2004) asserts that the move towards governance, i.e. towards increased decentralization in decision-making and a degree of privatization of public policy formulation, has contributed to fundamentally altering the role of advocacy groups. These interest-based organizations now tend to focus on research activities rather than seeking to influence, through



political weight, government decision-making. This implies a change in organizational capabilities, and indeed the very nature of an organization's operations. Amongst other issues, the literature mentions a deepening of the divide between organizations and members active on the local scene – those most familiar with issues in the field – and administrative headquarters, whose research activities have come to dominate its daily operations. In this regard, Laforest and Orsini (2004) assert that governments, by exerting control over access to the information on which this research depends, can exert a measure of influence over the policies that will be formulated by the research organizations, thereby gaining the ability to push aside more critical interest groups. Similarly, Gibsom, O'Donnell and Rideout (2007) contend that the ascent of NPM as a governance model for societies has led to the outsourcing of both the formulation and the implementation of policy: through the project-funding regime<sup>2</sup>, governments are able to transfer responsibility for the provision of public services to the voluntary sector. Thus, contracting and outsourcing, inherent in NPM, have forced many community-based organizations to allocate a portion of their own resources towards the provision of services which were traditionally the purview of the public sector. This privatization has numerous implications for the organizations in this sector. On the one hand, it forces them to develop capabilities that may initially seem far removed from their mandate: measuring and publishing results, report-writing, responding to Requests for Proposals, etc. On the other hand, it greatly hinders the financing of these organizations, making funding less predictable and contingent on obtaining contracts.

Although the aforementioned changes may seem to have arisen autonomously, like a wind of change sweeping through public administration, the mechanisms on which they are based have now formally become part of Canadian administrative structures. Their impacts have thus been crystallized, for better or for worse.

#### *The Crystallization of administrative reforms*

The first of these two milestones, the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), set out to “develop a long-term informal contract with the voluntary sector based on a mutual understanding of the sector's roles and responsibilities” (Laforest & Orsini, 2005, p. 486). The first stage of the VSI (2000 to 2002) aimed to establish a basis for collaboration along with key orientations. This was

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<sup>2</sup> “Project-funding regime” is defined as outsourcing by the government of service provision towards community-based organizations, providing subsidies one project at a time. The disbursement of these funds is often conditional, hinging on results, the availability of complimentary funding through end-user fees, etc.



accomplished by assembling seven committees representing the federal government and the community-based sector in sessions termed “Joint Tables”. The second stage of the VSI (2002-2005) dealt mainly with the implementation of the initiative according to the orientations defined in the first phase. These were: the redefinition of the links between the sector and government, a study of the sector's funding, the definition of the sector's role in policy formulation, the choice of appropriate regulation, etc. Laforest (2004) demonstrated how the VSI had allowed the voluntary sector to become an important actor in policy development whilst clearly defining the type of relationships expected between the sector and the federal government. Nevertheless, according to Laforest and Orsini (2005), the reconfiguration of the relationship between the sector and government took place largely at the expense dissent and innovation in the former. The government's message is clear: divergent, critical views will not be tolerated, and only those partners who show a willingness to toe the line will be granted a voice. Clearly, in such an environment, the VSI can be said to have recast voluntary organizations as administrative entities increasingly devoted to research, while their traditional interest-representation activities have fallen by the wayside.

The other important milestone concerning the crystallization of NPM-style administrative reform in governance structures was the 2006 passing of the federal law on accountability. This bill bore out Stephen Harper's Conservative Party electoral promises and came as a backlash in the wake of the Gomery Report on the sponsorship scandal. Amongst the many ramifications of this law, a few are particularly relevant to the sector (CCA, 2006; Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 2006). Firstly, the law governs lobbying practices. Through the July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, Law on Lobbying, it bans former public servants from employment as lobbyists in the 5 years following their departure from public service. For small public policy circles, this becomes particularly problematic, since public servants have, traditionally quite frequently « made the jump » towards the voluntary sector. A five-year restriction will likely have a detrimental impact on the sector's ability to attract talent and retain institutional memory. Secondly, given that the law makes no distinction between the concepts of « advocacy » and « lobbying»<sup>3</sup>, it applies to numerous community-based organizations (who essentially represent interests), exacting the same heavy accountability demands on them as it does on lobbyists.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “advocacy” is generally used to refer to activities that aim to develop awareness of a certain issue or ideology amongst the political class and the public at large. It is distinct from « lobbying », which seeks to directly influence politicians and the public service on specific courses of action. For a more precise differentiation of lobbying and advocacy practices, refer to the introduction to Alexandra Slaby's article, « Making a Single Case for the Arts: An International Perspective », prepared for the CCA.





Finally, by raising transparency requirements in the stewardship of public funds, this federal law increases the burden of accountability processes. Notwithstanding the praiseworthiness of transparency and accountability in the absolute, these objectives must be subordinate to the ability of public administration and semi-public entities to fulfill their mandate. However, in the context of NPM's informal and less hierarchical management style, whereby public policy networks play a key role in state governance, accountability and stewardship of public funds are in fact harder to monitor. The paradox is as follows: on the one hand, the logic of governance leads to a certain decentralization and fragmentation of the public policy planning and implementation processes; on the other, the corollary accountability problems are met with a tightening of the legal and administrative regulatory framework.

The following sub-section describes the impact of administrative reform on the voluntary sector.

## **1.2 The impact of administrative reform on the sector's activities**

Where the previous subsection aimed to demonstrate that the situation currently faced by the voluntary sector is rooted in a series of managerialism-tinged reforms, this subsection outlines the individual impacts of these reforms on organizations in the sector: the focus is on the reconfiguration of organizational capabilities and the constraints arising from accountability demands.

### *Reconfiguration of organisational capabilities*

The first effect of the new managerial framework on voluntary organizations concerns organizational capabilities. NPM and horizontal management have led to the offloading of certain responsibilities which had traditionally been the purview of government, thus burdening the sector's organizations with extra responsibilities, and paradoxically, fewer resources to manage them.

Laforest and Orsini (2005) contend that organizations in this sector find themselves having to acquire research and analysis capabilities, for instance by engaging professional researchers rather than activists and social workers, whose ties to the milieu are strongest. Thus, organizations face both the prospect of decreasing their familiarity with the members they advocate for, and the risk of alienating members who many no longer feel adequately represented by them. Further, the dependence of the voluntary sector on governments tends to influence policy determination, by both undermining policies which are out of step with current government orientations and by favouring "easily studied" policies, i.e. those with a



corresponding research requirement which is expected to be fast, simple and cheap. One can easily imagine the implications of such a *modus operandi* on organizations' ability to innovate and influence, given the serious restriction of creativity inherent in the "normalized" environment of sponsored research. Gibson, O'Donnell and Rideout (2004) argue that the project-funding regime, a corollary of sub-contracting in public administration, forces organizations in the voluntary sector to focus their efforts on demonstrating responsible stewardship of public funds, at the risk of neglecting their regular activities. An increase in the frequency of communication with government managers and an obsession over performance<sup>4</sup> are both manifestations of this phenomenon. Sporadic, unpredictable funding creates administrative problems, thereby reducing an organization's efficacy. Beyond the obvious consequences of lack of funding (high turnover, inability to offer competitive compensation, etc.), there are certain even more pernicious effects. For instance, it becomes practically impossible to reach a stable critical mass of research expertise. Project-based funding further implies that organizations will devote part of their time and resources to responding to requests for proposal and applying for bursaries, both of which are high-risk, low value-added practices with low rates of success.

The reconfiguration of governance towards a horizontal model also forces organizations in the voluntary sector to strike a balance between their policy-development capabilities, their project or program-implementation capabilities and their ability to influence public policy networks (Phillips, forthcoming). This exercise is often a zero-sum game, since an organization's technical and financial resources are finite. Nevertheless, beyond the mechanisms of arbitrage, the ability to participate remains largely influenced (one might even say "constrained") by the governance reform arising from NPM and horizontal governance. Indeed, as Laforest (2004) contends, the political influence of organizations has sharply decreased, notably due to the VSI process, during which the government systematically refused to discuss interest representation.

Recent administrative reforms have thus had a dual effect, substantially altering voluntary organizations' public policy planning and implementation capabilities whilst also installing a general accountability regime which had equally important effects on the structure of the sector and its constituent organization's efficacy.

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<sup>4</sup> Several authors have pondered the consequences of the generalization of performance-measurement as a means of control in public administration. Empirical studies point to the shortcomings of these tools as universal solutions, due in no small part to users' tendency to only measure that which is easily gauged, and due to the learning phenomenon whereby employees whose work is scrutinized by these performance measures learn how to « manipulate » the indicators. For an interesting discussion of performance measurement, see Radin (2006).

*The need for accountability in the allocation of public funds*

For several years now, and most particularly since the sponsorship scandal and the Gomery Inquiry, issues of transparency and accountability have lied at the heart of the debate around the management of Canadian public administrations. This preoccupation may be understood as a direct consequence of the push towards outsourcing and sub-contracting which typifies NPM and horizontal governance: whereas, in traditional public administrations, hierarchical control and administrative proximity generally sufficed to guarantee stakeholder accountability, the “privatization” of public policy planning and implementation radically alters this picture.

Bovens (2006, p. 9) defines accountability as follows:

A relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences.

Despite its syntactic shortcomings, this definition remains the most complete on offer. It effectively highlights the necessary interaction and power relationship between the stakeholders.

This paradox is precisely what Phillips and Levasseur (2004) criticize in their treatise on accountability in a horizontal governance context. Sub-contracting, a central concept in recent administrative reform, presupposes much-weakened links between policy planners and public service, despite horizontal governance’s self-proclaimed preoccupation with a greater inclusiveness aimed at allowing all concerned entities in the sector to have a voice in the debate. In such conditions, which rule out hierarchical control and channel all forms of control through informal or formal contracts, accountability mechanisms must be reviewed. For organizations in the voluntary sector, this has important ramifications. First, the burden of accountability mechanisms grows, in large part because each contract is treated individually, thereby precluding the establishment of lasting relationships. Further, the Request for Proposals process, which presupposes that deliverables and results will be specified ahead of time, hampers creativity, innovation and risk-taking. It is also to be noted that, from a purely managerial standpoint, the accountability processes increase the burden of management activities, often leading to problematic delays, even increasing the level of risk taken on by these organizations, which are forced to fund the projects themselves. Finally, the accountability regime reconfigures the relationships between the sector’s organizations and the public service. For instance, government project managers are forced to take on “accounting policing”



responsibilities, and place considerations of budgets and delays ahead of the societal impacts of the planned policies; organizations are subjected to performance measurement processes that are biased in favour of short-term results at the expense of projects which hold the promise of longer-term structuring effects. These findings are supported by the work of an independent group of experts on federal grants and contribution programs (2006), which recommended, amongst other things, both a simplification and a recalibration of the accountability process in accordance with the size of the subsidized projects.

It is necessary to strike a balance between the voluntary sector's quest for efficiency, efficacy and influence on one hand, and the fundamental need for accountability and transparency in public management on the other. Phillips and Levasseur (2004) argue that a more adequate accountability regime would necessarily feature financing mechanisms better suited to current accountability expectations. Indeed, this recommendation closely mirrors the views of participants in the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs' deliberations on bill C-2 (Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 2006).

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In conclusion, this theoretical analysis yields a few key observations which may be summarized as follows:

- Recent governance models inherited from NPM and horizontal governance have increased the policy planning and implementation responsibilities of organizations in the voluntary sector whilst simultaneously raising accountability expectations;
- These changes have negatively impacted these organizations' ability to fulfill their mandate, by increasing the instability of their funding, by modifying the nature of their activities and by subjecting them to cumbersome performance-measurement and accountability processes;

Despite allowing for a tighter relationship between governments and the sector in terms of policy planning and implementation, the horizontal governance model has also reduced organizations' ability to influence governments, and, by extension, correctly represent the sector's interests.

## **2. The Cultural Sector's Adaptation to Change**

This section is concerned with the specificities of, and challenges faced by, the cultural sector, defined as a sub-sector within the voluntary arena. The cultural sector possesses certain characteristics which allow for relevant comparisons with the voluntary sector, yet it also exhibits



certain specific traits which must be individually analyzed and which influence its efficacy. This section therefore considers the organization of the sector as well as its future prospects.

## **2.1 Institutional Framework in the Arts**

Given the nature of its activities, the cultural sector is particularly fragmented: it comprises a large number of organizations representing many domains across a vast and segmented territory in several jurisdictions. Further, the Canadian arts and culture sector is a shared federal, provincial and municipal competency. Its sources of funding are therefore quite diversified, although the municipal sector is slightly less present (Goff and Jenkins, 2006). This is problematic on two levels. Firstly, given that self-funding is impossible (with very few exceptions), the sector must count on government subsidies, thereby exposing itself to the vulnerabilities outlined in the previous section: unpredictable funding and cumbersome accountability processes. Secondly, in a politically-sensitive area such as culture, the problems arising from the fragmentation of jurisdictions –hence of funding- may be exacerbated by disagreements between the federal and provincial levels.

Nevertheless, and despite its reliance public funds, the cultural sector remains an important economic engine. A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada (2008), based on an updating of Statistics Canada's figures (2007), reveals that the cultural sector directly contributed 46 billion dollars to Canada's real GDP in 2007. Furthermore, if one takes into account both direct and indirect economic effects, the cultural sector accounts for 7.4% of GDP, or 84.6 billion dollars of global value added for that year. The sector is responsible for creating and maintaining 1.1 million jobs<sup>5</sup>.

As for the regulatory framework, the cultural sector is governed in the same way as its parent voluntary sector. Without dwelling on the details, it is worth recalling that the cultural sector is subject to the accountability standards defined by the Federal Accountability Act, with adverse effects on efficacy. Indeed, by perceiving the sector's activities as lobbying, not advocacy, the law imposes disproportionate constraints on the organizations. These impacts are in fact exacerbated due to the organizations' modest size and limited subsidies: accountability procedures do not vary according to the level of funding, resulting in an equal burden on large and small-scale subsidies.

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<sup>5</sup> Those figures are being challenged by some as inflated by including economic worth and jobs not directly related to the arts and culture sector (e.g. the whole newspaper and magazine sub-sector).



## 2.2 Challenges to be Met

The cultural sector must face a number of challenges if it is to remain effective and relevant. It must ensure that its members' activities continue to be perceived as legitimate in a changing institutional context, all the while adapting to the new macro-environmental realities.

The first challenge, legitimacy, concerns the perception of the sector's demands in the eyes of governmental institutions, which has an impact on the sector's ability to reach the public at large. Holden (2006) produced a study that is relevant to this point: the author contends that the cultural system is faced with a serious legitimacy crisis, arising from excessive self-absorption. Holden mentions (p. 52):

The 'cultural system' has become a closed conversation between professionals and politicians, with too much emphasis placed on satisfying funders, rather than on achieving the self-generated purposes of the cultural organisations themselves, or on engaging the public. Professionals talk among themselves, and talk to funders, but rarely talk to the public about what they do. Consequently the public has little idea about how culture operates and what it's capable of doing.

According to the author, culture creates three types of value: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional. Intrinsic value is derived from art as human experience, it is therefore subjective. Instrumental value describes the economic and social contributions of the cultural "industry". Institutional value arises from increases in cultural organizations' relevance, approval and legitimacy. The latter is most difficult to justify, yet it is through it that bonds between the sector and the public at large are forged. Holden (2006) maintains that the cultural sector's legitimacy crisis is mostly owed to its inability to include a wide audience in its creation of value, as the sector tends to concentrate exclusively on its own (professional and cultural) interests along with those of the political class. Since public opinion is mostly concerned with intrinsic and institutional value (instrumental value is scarcely important to the public at large), it is precisely through these channels that the sector's critical public legitimacy must be restored. Two paths towards this rehabilitation are put forth. First, the language must be changed in order to render it accessible to a wider audience: technical and public-policy jargon must be banished. Second, the sector must strive to achieve a common voice, a consistent and coherent message, in order to avoid appearing divided. In these ways, it will increase its relevance and seriousness in public opinion.

The second challenge is the adaptation to macro-economic changes arising from the progressive disappearance of the « traditional » cultural policy model. Goff and Jenkins (2006)



offer a definition of the “traditional model” based on: a) the centrality of Heritage Canada (and its affiliated entities) in policy planning and the funding of cultural activities, b) the intervention of the federal government in regulating funding (limitations on foreign ownership, direct investment in production, etc.) and the fiscal framework of the cultural industry, and c) the CRTC’s content regulations. The authors argue that new elements are profoundly altering this arrangement, and it is crucial that the cultural sector recognize this. Firstly, the importance of the municipal level increases, particularly as it pertains to fostering a critical mass of cultural organizations, with both substantive supply (through the presence of qualified professionals) and sufficient demand. Secondly, culture now evolves in inclusive terms: local participation in a large, decentralized cultural scene is now an instrument of social cohesion with ramifications that reach well beyond art, transcending into social debates. Thirdly, in line with its movement at the local level, culture is also being globalized and hence subjected to constraints which are characteristic of a globalization of flows: culture must survive in a world of increasingly open borders, where economic and commercial interests often trump the protection of cultural enterprises. The ability to act on a global scale thus becomes a necessity: the cultural sector must ensure that it interfaces with the global arena, be it directly or through national governments.

The third challenge concerns the sector’s organization and its ability to self-govern. The cultural sector is affected by the same problems as the voluntary sector (ever-increasing decentralization, the need for horizontal management, etc.), and it must adapt and reorganize itself in order to maintain its efficacy. According to Gattinger (2005), the cultural sector must acknowledge three fundamental facts. First, the need to engage key players must take precedence over the desire to coordinate activities and maintain message consistency. Since governance through networks presupposes interactions amongst a large number of actors, engaging these actors remains the only means of guaranteeing efficacy in the face of weakened hierarchies. Second is the need, due to horizontal governance, to develop new administrative capabilities, chief among which are consultation, persuasion and establishing bonds of trust. The need for these skills is relatively new, as the traditional *modus operandi* was predicated on structured management models where these aptitudes mattered less. The third reality is the need for the cultural sector to learn how to create administrative structures that adequately reflect this new “horizontal” paradigm. Current structures are faced with obsolescence due to their origins in a context of formal governance mechanisms. The structures should therefore foster the development of these new competencies, by means of a consultation forum, -a resource-sharing framework to build trust between the sector’s organizations-, or other deliberative mechanisms.



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In conclusion, a number of observations arise from this theoretical analysis and may be summarized as follows:

- The cultural sector's legitimacy is contingent on its ability to transcend the dialogue between politicians and professionals in order to mobilize a wider audience by “speaking its language” and presenting culture and cultural institutions as tangible assets;
- The cultural sector must recognize and adapt to the rise of local decision-making power (municipalities, local networks, etc.) and globalized networks as well as the erosion of traditional institutions based on national government;
- The cultural sector must adapt to the horizontal governance model by engaging its actors, by developing new competencies, and by creating administrative structures that support these competencies.

### **3. Case Studies**

Although the theoretical literature on the voluntary sector is rich, it is nevertheless worthwhile to go beyond this body of work to study the operations of other sectors. This section studies three complimentary sectors which have had to adapt to administrative reform and accountability imperatives: environmental organizations, the forestry industry and the feminist movement.

#### **3.1 Environmental Organizations: Fragmentation and Visibility**

Environmental defence organizations form an intriguing case study yielding a number of relevant comparisons with the cultural sector. Its advocacy –as opposed to lobbying- activities and its substantial fragmentation make it a comparable counterpart to the cultural sector.

First of all, as is the case in the cultural sector, the environmental sector is particularly fragmented: its organizations (and its causes) are numerous, with rival visions often diverging or competing; hierarchies are relatively weak. Also noteworthy are the wide variety of sub sectors and the relatively weak territorial compartmentalization of their activities, with several organizations claiming a pan Canadian mandate. The sector is also characterized by mindset of advocacy: few or no profits are at stake, research accounts for a large portion of the sector's activities, and attempts to influence are subordinate to larger societal objectives.

However, the environmental sector possesses a certain number of traits which temper comparisons with the cultural sector. To begin with, it enjoys high visibility and its subject matter





is relatively fashionable, whereas the cultural sector suffers from chronic attention deficit. Further, interest in environmental issues from media, politicians and the public at large greatly facilitates funding: private foundations are relatively numerous and well-endowed (in comparison with organizations in the cultural sector, at least), research subsidies are more readily available, and certain polluting yet lucrative industries (natural resources, petrochemicals, agri-food) often subsidize environmental organizations in order to strengthen their corporate social responsibility credentials.

Henriques and Sadorsky's (2004) findings are particularly relevant to the cultural sector. The authors demonstrate how several factors influence Canadian corporations' decision to take part in a voluntary environmental protection program. It is noteworthy that provincial governments, due to the sharing of competences and jurisdictions, are deemed equally important as the federal government. The authors further state that First Nations boast strong credibility in this debate, becoming standard-bearers for the entire sector- imagery is manifestly important. Finally, the public policy process in the environmental arena is found to be heavily influenced by the multiplicity of stakeholders (the public at large, industry, governments, non-profit organizations, etc.). This variable heavily alters power dynamics, which tend to become more informal, resting on softer, more diffuse sources of influence.

These findings are supported by Sharma and Henriques' (2004) empirical study, which sets out to analyze the variables influencing sustainable development practices. The empirical analysis pointed to the large influence of a number of stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, NGOs, lobbies, etc. on the practices of a corporation. It also demonstrated that governments only intervene as a last resort and therefore possess limited power. The policy-planning implications for the environmental sector are twofold. On one hand, government often plays a rather palliative role in the environmental arena, deeming it preferable to allow industry to self-regulate while NGOs and lobbies exert their influence over firms directly. This is entirely consistent with NPM's decentralization focus. On the other hand, the split federal-provincial jurisdiction over the environment puts a substantial onus of coordination on stakeholders if they wish to attain their goals. The choice of venue therefore becomes crucial.

In his study of "venue shopping", Pralle (2003) clearly demonstrates that environmental advocacy groups need to choose venues that are best suited to their message. The choice of venue thus generally amounts to a pronouncement by the sector as to the nature and the roots of a given problem: the venue is not a neutral public arena but a mindset linked to discourse and ideological context. Environmental organizations' discourse must therefore be tailored to the



venue – local, provincial or regional –, and must strike a chord with the chosen interlocutors. Conversely, the venue may also have an inertia effect on the sector's discourse and ideology: by limiting itself to one venue, the sector may become a prisoner of a given mindset. This is particularly important when one considers the ability of the sector to innovate, both in terms of policy planning and influence.

### **3.2 The Forestry Industry: Unity, Power and Coordination**

The forestry industry is another sector where interactions with governments are numerous. This industry, however, behaves like a lobby, seeking to influence government policy in ways that benefit its firms. Even though comparisons with the cultural sector are less obvious, the forestry sector still yields relevant observations: its ability to establish relationships with the various echelons of government, as well as the coherence of its message, make it a model of effectiveness.

In Canada, the forestry industry is a major economic sector: it accounts for 2.7% of GDP, 822,400 jobs - 294,100 direct, 453,400 indirect and related- and it contributes 23.4 billion dollars to Canada's trade balance. Forestry lobbyists are funded by private firms and boast a clear political agenda: to defend the interests of firms by ensuring easy and cheap access to resources and by attempting to influence government towards a favourable regulatory framework. Thus, contrary to the public sector, which adopts advocacy behaviours and techniques, the forestry sector behaves as a lobby. This directly impacts the nature of its activities: in this sector, influence is vastly more important than research. The latter is seen as a tool to promote interests rather than a means to further knowledge or study best practices.

The sector's structure is also somewhat different. There are numerous organizations, but they are segmented in a stricter way, according to jurisdiction, territory and product type. Given the lack of contention around the political agenda to be promoted, there is little competition amongst organizations, and dissent is rare. The sector's organizations boast clearly defined missions and mandates, and the overstepping of one organization into another's area of competence or jurisdiction is infrequent.

With regards to the sector's ability to influence, it is important to note that, beyond the most obvious characteristics (better funding, ease of access to power) - which, in any event, never apply to the cultural sector- a number of practices may prove relevant.



The first of these practices is the creation of legitimacy. Driscoll (2006) contends that sectoral associations have an important role to play in the legitimization of a sector. This legitimization process directly affects the associations' efficacy, because the perceived legitimacy of the demands determines the sector's ability to be heard out by governments, which, in the case of economic giants such as forestry companies, may be a relatively easy task despite their harmful impacts on the environment. Legitimization processes are therefore particularly worthy of analysis. The forestry industry employs two such processes: one is substantial, seeking to present the concrete benefits of the industry (jobs, exports, etc.); the other is symbolic, making use of strong imagery and participating in ecological discourse. Discourse and symbols are as important as concrete effects.

The second practice is directly related to the first and concerns the very role of sectoral associations. According to Parkins and Mitchell (2003), these associations stand to benefit from being perceived (and studied) as more inclusive venues for deliberation. The traditional literature has tended to portray sectoral associations as being in the pursuit of concrete results, yet a wider-reaching perspective, one which emphasizes deliberation, could paint these associations as forums for public education. The associations, and the industry at large, would gain legitimacy. This deliberative perspective, which would include dissident voices, would also likely inverse the current situation, making research activities more useful than politically-driven research -at least from the standpoint of fundamental knowledge. Finally, given that open and inclusive deliberation forums tend to foster inter-institutional relations (at the expense of the more formal and closed interpersonal relations), restructuring into forums might alleviate certain accountability and transparency problems arising from the trend towards sub-contracting and horizontal governance.

The third practice of the forestry sector which may be adopted by the cultural sector concerns influence -as opposed to research- abilities. Indeed, Biggs et al. (2004), argue that the forestry sector is a particular effective lobbyist. This strength essentially stems from three factors. First is the use of cooption (assimilation of diverging views) in order to reduce the level of dissent in internal debates, thus ensuring a common front and clear demands are presented to government bodies. The second factor is the forestry sector's recognition that political problems must be solved politically. The sector thus makes use of informal political levers to its advantage (for instance by engaging groups of workers strongly concerned by the sector's vitality). In an environment where governance is decentralized, this proves to be a crucial ability. The third and



last factor is the sector's ability to establish alliances with other sectors to exploit their influence in areas of common concern.

### **3.3 Feminist Movements : Effectiveness Despite Constraints**

Lastly, feminist movements likely share the most commonality with the cultural sector in terms of advocacy capabilities. The sector has been known to fall prey to dominant ideologies, it suffers from chronic under funding and depends on government funds, thereby subjecting it to cumbersome accountability demands (Troniak, 2007), and yet it has seen its share of noteworthy victories which may serve as examples for the cultural sector.

The first form of effectiveness in the feminist movements may be observed in the way it resisted the backlash from "human rights" claims in terms of domestic abuse (Mann, 2008). This success was reached in three different ways. First, in a diffuse but tangible fashion, feminist movements from the 1970s onwards helped install a "gender equality regime", culminating in the endorsement of this principle in the 1982 constitutional amendment. This was achieved chiefly through advocacy, research and awareness-development. Further, feminist movements were able to adapt their discourse, to review their rhetoric in order to ensure their relevance to new governance structures, without losing sight of their core goal, "to eradicate the economic, social, political, and intimate oppression of women" (p. 65). By basing their claims on fundamental principles and ideals rather than focussing on techniques and strategy, feminist movements have been able transform themselves without betraying their *raison d'être*. Finally, feminist movements have been able to establish themselves as main interlocutors in nearly all areas where domestic violence was discussed. This was the result of concrete and respectful engagement in relevant forums, in accordance with the rules of constructive dialog.

Nevertheless, participation in forums with a near-excessive level of inclusivity can also hamper the ability to influence policy. This was precisely the case with the National Action Committee on women's status (NAC) as described by Montpetit et al. (2004). Caught between a desire to provide a public deliberation space and a need to freely criticize existing policy while proposing alternatives, the NAC chose to become an inclusive forum. By making this choice, the NAC lost its political influence: the most critical members left the organization, the deliberative process severely hampered the preparation of clear and concise policies to government authorities, and internal squabbles over the organization's role erupted. Although such catastrophic consequences do not systematically accompany movements towards greater inclusivity, the deliberative function is not without its disadvantages in terms of organizational capabilities.



#### **4. Relevant Observations for the Cultural Sector**

The preceding analysis highlighted both best practices and potential pitfalls for advocacy and lobbying organizations. This section formally restates these observations and dwells on their relevance to the cultural sector.

These findings can be articulated along three main orientations: the structure of the cultural sector, the legitimacy of its demands and the nature of its activities.

##### **4.1 First Orientation: the Structure of the Sector**

The first orientation concerns the sector's structure, i.e. its constituent organizations and the links between them.

The cultural sector encompasses a great many associations which represent a vast array of disciplines located across multiple jurisdictions. The very nature of advocacy in the cultural sector implies interacting with several levels of government and several departments within one same level. In this regard, the importance of the local level is constantly rising. On one hand, the role of municipalities in fostering a critical mass of cultural organizations is well established: the cultural sector must therefore ensure that it opens a meaningful dialogue with municipalities. On the other hand, increasing the cultural sector's inclusivity necessitates the engagement of local stakeholders. By ensuring that small communities are active participants, the cultural sector will increasingly be able to affect social policy decision-making. The sector must also ensure that it remains a relevant global actor, by projecting itself in worldwide cultural production, and by having a voice in international forums that deal directly with culture or any other area that affects culture (trade liberalization, intellectual property, etc.).

Given this need for reconfiguration, coordination of activities becomes essential.

The sector would do well to follow the example of the forestry sector, whose associations are clearly segmented along jurisdiction and product lines. This structure allows for a more systematic presence with governments. The forestry sector is also exemplary in the coherence of its message and demands. The forestry sector is at its core a lobby whose purpose it is to defend the interests of forestry firms, and which knows very little internal dissent - all of which undeniably simplifies the coordination of strategies and orientations. And yet, notwithstanding the greater difficulty a similar exercise would entail in the cultural sector, it would likely enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the sector's demands. The idea of creating a unique and inclusive forum (according to the principles of deliberative democracy) may help simplify the



debate around the sector's demands and orientations. Such a forum, were it to be truly inclusive, could decrease internal dissent, lending the sector a coherent voice.

#### **4.2 Second Orientation: the Legitimacy of the Sector's Demands**

The second orientation concerns the legitimacy of the demands being presented by the sector. The cultural sector is currently confronted with a chronic lack of media attention which hampers its ability to seek funding. It stands to increase its influence by establishing itself as a key player in public governance.

Environment organizations have been very successful in imposing their ideas in public opinion. The notion that, as a society, we must do more to protect the environment is now part common lore, having gone as far as taking pride of place in the platforms of certain political parties. These successes were the results of two different tactics. First, the environment sector has shown itself remarkably able to educate and develop awareness around its cause. It was not content to attempt to directly influence government, and recognized that its being heard depended directly on its legitimacy in public opinion. Second, the sector has made very effective use of symbols: its spokespersons are well-known (first nations, prominent environmentalists, etc.) and its discourse clearly reaches beyond substantive arguments into the realm of the symbolic.

The cultural sector has much to gain from adopting similar tactics. It could initially attempt to establish its paramount importance in the governance of Canadian society. To do so, it will need to convince the public at large as well as political parties of the importance of culture in public governance. The idea of fostering a dialog with the public could assist in this regard, whilst also stimulating the existential questioning of the sector- by forcing it outside of the comfort zone of traditional discussion venues. The sector should also learn to make use of imagery with the same effectiveness as environmental organizations: artists often enjoy high visibility in the media, but too few of them exploit it to demonstrate how art and culture are fundamental to society's development. It is worth repeating that the cultural sector must delve outside of traditional discussion venues (which tend to lead to a dialogue between politicians and professionals in the cultural sector) to include the public at large, and employ rhetoric with that audience in mind. By presenting culture and its institutions as tangible assets, the cultural sector stands to increase its legitimacy.



### **4.3 Third Orientation : The Sector's Activities**

The third orientation concerns the nature of the sector's activities. It is important for cultural organizations to soul-search, to determine what they would like to be. The feminists were able to reinvent themselves and adapt their activities to a changing public policy environment without losing sight of their fundamental mission: the cultural sector would do well to take a page from their book and ask itself questions on how it might be able to increase its effectiveness.

Advocacy activities are often broken down into two categories which are seen to be irreconcilable: public policy research and influencing activities. The former presupposes a proximity to government, thus substantially reducing the room for innovation and independence, but also offers a simpler way to ensure an organization's financial viability. The latter category, which requires a certain independence from government authorities in order to be able to effectively represent the sector's interests, is however more difficult to access in the current environment of horizontal governance and decentralization. Although it may aspire to excelling in both areas, the cultural sector must be realistic and accept the need for compromise. The sector must essentially ask itself what it values most: formulating and implementing public policy, or being able to influence government entities. Proximity of government (in administrative, institutional or even ideological terms) is the most important variable, as the potential for dissent decreases with proximity.

And yet, even if a strategy of influence is adopted, the potential pitfalls are numerous, often running counter to other objectives such as developing awareness in the public at large. The experience of the NAC feminist movement clearly demonstrates how a desire for inclusiveness and deliberation can have the dual nefarious effects of showing government an increasingly divided front and reducing innovation, since the latter arises from a certain level of dissent and questioning through power dynamics amongst key members of coalitions.

Finally, the issue of competency development remains relevant. Horizontal governance calls for certain competencies which were less necessary in traditional administrative configurations, and the cultural sector must learn to develop these skills. It should aim to become a sector where consensus-building and exchanges are fluid, and boasting formal and informal structures adapted to this new reality.



## **5. Conclusion**

The cultural sector faces many different challenges: it must cope with a new paradigm within which its relationships with various levels of government are both more difficult and less formal, it must continue to seek results in an administrative context of scarce resources and where accountability expectations are high and costly, it must remain relevant in public opinion to ensure its legitimacy and it must, finally, learn to live with the gradual disappearance of the traditional cultural policy model.

A profound, quasi-existential reflection is therefore called for. The sector must devote attention to its structure, to maintaining the legitimacy of its demands and interventions, as well as to the very nature of its activities. By clearly analyzing the origins of administrative reforms and their impact on the activities of the voluntary sector, by identifying the main challenges the cultural sector will be faced with, and by observing the ways in which three other sectors have met such challenges, this report reaches a number of key findings. The orientations derived from these findings, rather than formal recommendations, constitute elements to be taken into account in the context of an intra-sectoral self-examination.

The effort required is admittedly substantial, but equally large rewards can be expected. The arts and culture remain the most important conduits of traditions and of the fundamental elements of social cohesion.





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